BX
5535
.C55

PACIFIC UNITARIAN SCHOOL
FOR THE MINISTRY

"FROM FAITH TO FAITH"

JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

1886-87

JANUARY

BOSTON
GEO. H. ELLIS, 141 FRANKLIN STREET

Extracts from a few of the Press Notices on Dr. Clarke's New Books.

VEXED QUESTIONS IN THEOLOGY:

A SERIES OF ESSAYS.

Cloth, 12mo. Price $1.00.

"They look at everything, of course, from the point of view of a Unitarian, and a rather liberal one at that. But it is pleasant to see how much there is in such a book that all Christians can indorse, and the spirit and style of these essays we are glad to commend."—*Congregationalist.*

"It shows a remarkable degree of scholarship and deep research."—*The Church Union.*

"There is winsomeness, sweetness, breadth of view, on every page. In greater degree than many Unitarian writers, he is able to place himself at the point of outlook held by the orthodox believer; and, in the main, the orthodox conception of New Testament truth is accurately and candidly stated."—*Christian Union.*

"No American writer has skilled himself more effectively in the art of studying vexed theological questions, and treating them candidly, than Dr. Clarke."—*Journal of Education.*

THE PROBLEM OF THE FOURTH GOSPEL:

THE QUESTION OF ITS ORIGIN STATED AND DISCUSSED.

Square 16mo. Price, Cloth, 50 cents; Paper, 25 cents.

"There is nothing keener and more unanswerable in the language on the subject than *The Authorship of the Fourth Gospel,** by the late lamented Ezra Abbot; and in the *Problem of the Fourth Gospel*, just published by James Freeman Clarke, we have a sober review of the entire discussion, which, brief as it is, could hardly be better."—*Independent.*

"Dr. Clarke takes up this question of the origin of the Gospel, and states and discusses the question with much clearness and ability."—*National Baptist.*

"A book which will be very helpful to all Sunday-school teachers who study the Fourth Gospel for the spiritual teaching it conveys. That gospel is to so many Christians the 'Heart of Christ,' as Dr. Sears called it, that this reverent and thoughtful discussion of its claims to be received as a true transcript of the life and teaching of Jesus will be welcomed by all candid inquirers."—*Every Other Sunday.*

GEO. H. ELLIS, Publisher,

141 Franklin Street, Boston.

---

*A new edition of this work will soon be published, with other of Dr. Abbot's Critical Essays.

"FROM FAITH TO FAITH."

"From faith to faith."— ROMANS i., 17.

WE live between two worlds,— the world of things seen and temporal and the world of things unseen and eternal; the world of which we take hold through the senses, and that which we apprehend by faith. We walk by sight, and we walk by faith. Every one, every day, lives by both these faculties.

Faith is a deep fountain in the soul, below reason, below knowledge, far below sensible experience; and without the exercise of faith we could not live. We believe in the reality of an outward world. We believe the sun, moon, and stars are not appearances, but realities; that trees and flowers, rocks and earth, men and women, are actual existences. And yet, after all, these are only pictures on the retina of the eye. Do you think you see your friend when you look at him? Not at all. All that the bodily sense perceives, and carries by a nerve to the brain, is a picture in the camera obscura at the back of the eye. And yet, when I say this, it does not make you doubt for a moment that you really are looking at an actual person outside of yourself. Why? Because you are made to have faith in substance below all phenomena. This faith is universal and necessary. We could not act without it. It is an instinctive, universal, and necessary faith which is given to every human being.

From faith to faith! From this faith in the reality of an outward world, we grow up into other forms of faith, deeper, larger, more intense. How large a part of our life comes from within, not from without!

The next step which we take by faith is our confidence that these realities about us are upheld by unchanging law. We believe that the laws of nature are permanent. What reason have we for thinking that, when we wake in the morning, we shall find things around us as we left them the night before; that we shall meet our family as usual around the breakfast table; our place of business where it was; the work of life going on just at it did yesterday; human nature always the same? What reason have we for trusting that our food will nourish, and not poison us; that our clothing will keep us warm? "Because it always has been so," you say. Yes: that is one reason. Experience turns faith into knowledge. But how small is our experience! How little that "always" is, compared with the immensities of duration! Behind and below this short experience of the stability of things lies an instinctive faith that God is the same, yesterday, to-day, and forever; that his laws work steadily and surely, without haste or rest; that there is no caprice, no accident, no irregularity in the universe. This second step of faith is the foundation on which all science rests,—that all forces are governed by unchanging and eternal law; that there cannot be any violation of natural law. Even the miracles of Jesus need not be regarded as violations of law, but rather as manifestations of other laws deeper and higher than those with which we are now familiar. All progress in science and the arts consists in new revelations or applications of law. There was nothing preternatural or unnatural in the wonderful works of Jesus. They were done by the supreme force of soul. One day, perhaps, when the race has advanced far enough, and we have "perfect men in Christ Jesus," his prediction may be fulfilled,—"Greater works than these shall ye do, because I go to my Father."

I do not think we notice how large a part of our life comes from this mysterious region of things unseen. Take some familiar illustrations.

A short time since there was an exhibition of old pictures of the Washington family. George Washington himself was

there, looking somewhat differently from his usual portraits. Martha Washington was there, and members of the Custis family and Lee family. Whence came the interest which brought crowds to look at the paintings? Nothing in the pictures themselves. If they had had no names attached to them, few persons would have gone to see them. But they roused great memories, they brought up the latent poetry of the soul. We were carried back to the old heroic age of our fathers. We walked by faith amid invisible and shadowy recollections. These pictures stimulated the imagination to represent once more the undying past.

You leave the home of your boyhood, the country farm among the hills. You go out West or come to Boston. You engage in business struggles. You are a soldier on the battle-field of life. One day, you say, "I will go and look at the old place." So you return to the mountain home of childhood. You go through the rooms, which seemed so large once and look so small now. Here you played by your mother's side, on the sunny floor. In that field, you took your first ride on horseback. Here is the garden where you gathered raspberries and strawberries for breakfast, amid the early dew. How small a part of what you feel resides in the outward objects! To a stranger, they are insignificant. It is the world within which they awaken that gives all the charm to the scene,— the world of faith, of imagination, of loving memory.

Thus, we walk by faith in our affections. We have confidence in father and mother, brothers and sisters and friends. We are rooted in this surrounding love. It is the home of the heart. What a blessing that children grow up in this atmosphere of belief, that they take for granted that their parents and friends are wise and good; lean on these affections, and are safe; look back to them in after life, and have their souls still fed out of the sacred soil of such memories!

From faith to faith! Next comes our faith in human nature. There is an instinct of confidence of man in man, with-

out which there could be no society, no union, no common work. Men are often deceived; but they must still take for granted that, in the main, men will do right, tell the truth, and stand by their engagements. The whole business world rests on this confidence. One of the worst evils of defalcations, embezzlements, false pretences, is that these all tend to weaken the great confidence of man in man. They give color to the base philosophy which assumes that men are all selfish, that every one has his price, that the world is given over to the Evil One. On the other hand, every act of self-sacrificing honesty, all loyalty to principle, each uncompromising adherence to justice and truth, strengthens man's confidence in man. And, unless we believe in goodness, unless we have confidence that men, though weak and liable to fall, do not love evil, how can any one try to make the world better? What a faith Jesus must have had in the moral capability of man when he said, "Be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect!" What an ideal of goodness he and his apostles held up before the world, taking for granted that the world would follow! and their faith in men worked on human minds and hearts to purify, uplift, and redeem.

If you wish to do good to your brother, you must have confidence in him. This is the first and most essential step toward helping him. Take for granted that men are mean and false, and you make them so. Take for granted that they wish to do right, and you lead them up the right way. They take courage from your confidence, and begin to believe in themselves.

From faith to faith! Confidence in man leads us to trust in God. He who has not faith in his brother whom he has seen, how can he have faith in God whom he has not seen? We say that God is good, and so we trust him. But what do we mean by goodness, except the goodness we have seen here? Infinite goodness is, to our conception, human justice, human generosity, human pity, human self-sacrifice, carried upward to their perfection. If we have no faith in

man, how can we have faith in God? Every noble act of devotion to truth, every pure life unstained with evil, every word of pity, every instance of forgiving goodness, helps us to a better faith in that divine and eternal goodness which has no variableness or shadow of turning.

From faith to faith! From faith in man, we rise to faith in God. This is trust, absolute trust, that the universe is based on goodness and love; that all things work together for good; that good is stronger than evil, and must overcome it; that God loves all his children; and that sin and woe, the misery and wickedness of this world, are to end in peace and joy. This was the great faith of Jesus. It was a faith for all mankind on whom the sun shone and the rain fell. Before the mind of Jesus there stood no everlasting hell, as a black contrast and counterpoise to an infinite heaven. He believed that he could draw all men unto him, and so to God. He would have the good news of a divine salvation preached to every creature. All who labored and were heavy laden could find rest in this great faith and hope. He has put the spirit into our hearts by which we say, Father; and, when we trust in God as a father, we have the germ of all religious faith.

Yet we are all inclined to say with the disciples, "Lord, I believe: help mine unbelief." We believe a little, but we need to believe more. How shall we increase our faith?

Every act of faith in God increases our faith in him. To him who hath shall be given. He who waits on the Lord will increase his strength. We do not increase our faith by argument, but by exercise. As life advances, our faith ought to deepen and strengthen.

Many persons find it hard to believe in any special providence. They say: "God governs the world by laws, and he never interferes with their workings. When we obey the natural laws, we are rewarded: when we disobey them, we are punished. How can I believe that God will alter the working of his laws to meet the needs, the dangers, the exigencies of any individual?"

No, we need not believe this, and yet we may have faith in a Father who watches over his children. Often, what seem to be the greatest of calamities turn out to be blessings. It seemed a dreadful thing for the Pilgrim Fathers to be driven by oppression from their pleasant homes in old England, to come to these wild shores, with a mysterious wilderness on one side, full of alarms, and a stormy sea on the other. But now we see the great opportunity which was given them to lay deep the foundations of a nation. Was it accident that brought them here? Was it blind law that put a people in New England who believed at once in order and liberty, in freedom and union, in religion and education? The roots of this mighty nation still draw nutriment from that sad and solemn beginning, foreordained before the foundation of the world.

The old man sits before his door beneath the great elm on a summer's afternoon, and recalls his past life. He sees how mercifully he has been led from the beginning; how his wild youth was restrained, his impetuous passions tempered, by events and circumstances, in which he now sees everywhere a protecting hand. He looks back on trials and disasters which he found it hard to bear, to disappointments which at the time appeared to be intolerable. Now, the setting sun of his life parts the clouds through which it has travelled during the day, and throws a radiance of glory, beauty, and blessing on the long succession of his years. Strength has come to him through this discipline. He has learned to be patient, to be generous, to be self-forgetting. He feels himself more and more in the presence of a heavenly Father, whose hand has led him through these varied scenes. What once looked like the work of an evil destiny he now finds to be the leading of a tender Providence,

And so he can say: —

> "That more and more a Providence
> Of love is understood,
> Making the springs of time and sense
> Sweet with eternal good.

"That care and trial seem at last,
In memory's sunset air,
Like mountain ranges overpast
In purple distance fair.

"That all the jarring notes of life
Are blended in a psalm,
And all the angles of its strife
Slow rounded into calm."

From faith to faith! In the same way, our faith in prayer grows till it becomes like that of Jesus, unwavering and sure. We often think, before experience has taught us better, that prayer is only contemplation, meditation; that the only answer to prayer is the reaction of our own thoughts,— that it is not communion, but self-communion. We say that God will not change his laws in answer to prayer; and, having said that, we think the question settled. Yes, he does not change his laws. But may it not be one of his laws that those who ask him sincerely and earnestly for inward peace, light, strength, pardon, comfort, shall receive it? Far down in the mysterious depths of the soul, below any distinct consciousness, is the region where we are in communion with God. We hear no sound,— there is no tempest, no earthquake, no fire,— but a voice so low and sweet and still that we only know the peace that comes, the strength that is given, the comfort of the Holy Spirit shed abroad in our hearts; and we say, "I *was* weak: I *am* strong."

The little child, in its childish grief, runs to its father and mother, that it may be folded in their arms. That is enough. We go to our heavenly Father, and that is enough. Is an earthly father nearer than he? Is any mortal tenderness so divinely tender as his? Shall we allow any little theories of law and causation to come between us and that great source of peace?

And so, too, of our faith in immortality. Men say, "We may see some reasons for believing in it, but we cannot know it." Suppose some one should say to your little boy: "Your

father is very kind to you while you are with him, but he does not care whether you live or die. If you should fall into the sea from a boat, he would not put out his hand to save your life." The boy would answer: "I know better. I know that he would." The child would know it: it would be no mere probability. And shall we say of God: Yes, he is our Father while we are here. He is an ever-present friend in whom we live and move and breathe. He has formed us with these wonderful powers by which we can know him and love him. He has educated us by the long experience of life, by the benignant glory of nature, by the far-reaching lessons of history, by the teaching of all the wise and good, by the love of all the dear and true; and then he will let us drop into nothing after these few years of earthly experience! He will let us fall back into the abyss of annihilation, while we are yet advancing in thought, aspiration, hope, our real life hardly begun, our reason but half developed, our best powers in their infantile stage of development! And will you tell me that I do not know the contrary, but only conjecture it? If I really know God as my Father, I know that he will not let me go: he will keep his child safe.

"I know not what the future hath
Of wonder or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.

"And so, beside the silent sea,
I wait the muffled oar:
No harm from him can come to me
On ocean or ashore."

Thus, faith grows just as knowledge grows. We climb from faith to faith by a manifold experience, and from the childish faith to that manly faith which is still child-like. We pass beyond the sandy deserts of doubt, the morass of scepticism: we rise to higher altitudes and to a broader expanse of vision. Below and behind are the difficult ravines,

the tangled thickets, through which we passed with many a struggle. Now, we see them resting in sunny peace and picturesque shadow below. We breathe the air of the upper skies. We are surrounded by a broad expanse of heaven. We are encircled and embraced by a divine love. Thus, we go from faith to faith!